

An Essay
on "Constipation"
Respectfully Submitted
to the
Faculty of the Homeopathic
Medical College of
Pennsylvania
by
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Jan. 31st 55.

Constipation

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And the fact of many of the believers, as well as the
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ease, induced me to select it as the subject of my
Thesis, not with the expectation of a doing anything
to advance, but, as it is an affection frequently
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"Constipation"

This formidable and frequently occurring disease, has perhaps received less investigation at the hands of the Physician, than many of much less consequence, which I suppose is owing to the very imperfect system of Old School practice, for there is no doubt, that in a majority of cases of Constipation, they administer some of their powerful laxatives, which have the desired effect of opening the bowels and so both patient and physician are satisfied, but the patient may actually be worse off than before.

And the fact of many of the believers, as well as, the unbelievers in Homeopathy, entertain some doubts of the efficacy of Homeopathic agents in this disease, induced me to select it as the subject of my Thesis, not with the expectation of adding anything to science, but, as it is an affection frequently met by the Physician in his "daily walks" the investigation of it may, I trust, be of some importance to myself. The word Constipation is derived from the Latin, Constipatio, from constipare, (to press, and

3
effort, to crumple. And, besides, a state of the bowels
in which the evacuations do not take place as frequent
ly as usual, or are unordinately hard and are expe-
ried with difficulty. It is a well known fact, that the
retention of any of the natural excretions produces
derangement of the animal economy. The sup-
pression of the cutaneous excretions is followed by
local inflammation. The suppression and retention
of urine brings on a sudden paralysis of the nervous
system; and the suppression and retention of the
contents of the alimentary canal produce indig-
estion, foul breath, hemorrhoids, chronic head-
ache, cutaneous affections, and, in fact, a vast
number of diseases, which though they may not
arise directly from this source, yet, may be traced
back to some and gradual influence. Without
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of this affection, I shall endeavor to give the
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Mental occupation; while bodily activity and a
 correspondent ingestion of food protect the cultivation
 of the soil. The most common cause of this evil
 would, therefore, seem to be an inert State of the
 bowels, from want of exercise and want of suffi-
 cient stimulus from food. Weakness of the bowels,
 a want of sufficient muscular secretion, and, above
 all a want of sufficient quantity of healthy bile,
 are also common causes. The bile is said to be the
 natural purgative, consequently its deficiency
 will leave the intestines in a torpid condition,
 and post mortem examinations have revealed
 the fact, that in many cases of ^{functional} constipation
 the bowels are found unusually small.
 Dry atmosphere also predisposes to this affection,
 and we find, therefore, that the inhabitants of
 the eastern parts of the United States are more
 disposed to it than the warmer climate of
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 Dry atmosphere also pre-disposes to this affection,
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 Food is composed of two kinds of substances, possessing

different properties; one soluble and nutritious and the other insoluble and non-nutritious. The former is taken up in a great measure, by the absorbent vessels and conveyed into the blood. The latter, the non-nutritive, remains in the intestines, stimulates their action, and is subsequently expelled. The pathological state involved in this affection has been scientifically ascertained by Prof. Small from the more complicated description given by J. B. Keating and Stretton, it is as follows: — 1. The presence of foreign bodies obstructing the intestinal canal. 2. Structural lesions of the intestines, which may diminish its calibre, or furnish to the watery cavities in which they may tarry. 3. Compression, Strangulation, or agination of the intestine. 4. Absence of any stercoraceous residue after long continued diarrhoea, or when the pyloric orifice refuses a passage to the alimentary substances, when the latter are insufficient, when they are entirely assimilated. 5. Excessive contractility of certain portions of the intestinal tube.

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6. Medicated in the treatment of anorexia, which
 allows considerable discussion, and a long series
 cases of paralysis. 7. An alteration of the product
 of exhalation, and of secretion from within
 the surface of the intestinal tube. It being
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 ledge to enter into a detail of the various results
 and complications of Constipation, I shall take
 up that portion of the subject with which I
 have made myself most familiar, and this
 the means of prevention &c., & how it appears that
 the first important step to be taken for the pre-
 ventive of the disease, should be the use of
 proper food, and, as it is of vital importance, it
 the physician who is able to point out to his patient,
 who is predisposed to this affection, the articles
 of diet he should use and discard, and to
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 may be well to dwell upon this portion of the
 subject. Fine flour is a very common article
 of food, and, thus in its varied preparations, with

6. Weakness in the movement of contraction, which allows considerable distension, and accompanies cases of Paralysis. 7. An alteration of the products of exhalation, and of secretion poured out on the surface of the intestinal tube. It being altogether beyond my limited Sphere of knowledge to enter into a detail of the various results and complications of Constipation, I shall take up that portion of the subject with which I have made myself most familiar, such as the means of Prevention &c. Now it appears that the first important step to be taken for the prevention of Constipation, should be the use of proper food, and, as it is of vital importance to the physician to be able to point out to his patient, who is predisposed to this affection, the articles of diet he should use and discard, and to assign scientific reasons for his advice; it may be well to dwell upon this portion of the subject. Fine flour is a very common article of food, and, this in its varied preparations unless

Wednesday June 10th 1863
Dear Mother
I have just received your letter of the 7th inst. and
am glad to hear from you. I am well and hope
these few lines will find you the same. I have
not much news to write at present. I am
still in the hospital and am getting on
fairly well. I have been out a few times
but am not yet strong enough to go
far. I have been thinking of writing you
often but have not had time. I hope
to hear from you soon. I am
your affectionate son
John

counteracted by some other article, is an indirect
 cause of Constipation; and the reason is, that its
 particles are in a great measure absorbed. The
 same is true of other substances containing
 a considerable proportion of nutritious matter,
 such as, Jelly, arrow-root, Starch, Milk and its
 preparations. Dr Truman, in his "Rules for Diet,"
 says "The French plan of eating enormous
 quantities of bread at dinner is unwholesome
 for most people, unless they take very violent
 exercise. Dogs, according to the French Physi-
 -cists, die after feeding about three weeks
 on fine bread, but will live on coarse bread
 an indefinite time. Birds are very fond of
 cracked wheat hominy and eat it with avid-
 -ity; and it agrees with them. Wheat, rye,
 barley, oats, and maize are employed in dif-
 -ferent countries, according to the properties
 of the soil and the taste of the inhabitants.
 Wheat seems to be more ~~extensively~~ extensively used than
 either of the others, and is perhaps the most

palatable and the most digestible. This grain is not used entire. It consists principally of two substances, the coverings, or part containing, and the flour or the part contained.

In the early ages of the world, these were probably used together; but art has been directed to their separation, and has reduced the flour, as nearly as possible to a state of amorphous powder. Persons that are constituted find a very happy effect from the use of bran bread, for, as I before remarked, Flour, taken apart from its coverings, has a most entangling property; and it seems, that the external skin of the grain, thus thrown away, contains very important properties; and, instead of being in a great measure rejected, it should be preserved and ground up with the flour.

Mr. Millon reported to the Academy of Sciences that the bran of wheat possessed various valuable properties. Whether any of these have a purgative effect, is not known; but it has been

supposed, however, that the wheaten bran operates
 in two ways: first by the stimulus of the edges of
 its branny particles; second by mere bulk. It is
 supposed to operate in the first mode by the undiss-
 olved portions of bran acting on the Mucus
 coat of the intestines, exciting thereby the nervous
 energies of the parts, and producing contraction
 of the muscular fibres, secondly bulk is necessary
 to keep up the action of the bowels, as has been already
 shown in the allusion to the effect of highly nutriti-
 -ous substances, which, being in a great measure
 taken up by the Lacks, leave no mass of insoluble
 matter to fill the culibre and excite the action of
 the intestines. Fruit is found to be a very grate-
 -ful and useful article of food to those who
 suffer from constipation, and fresh fruits
 are preferable to the dried, because ~~and~~ the dried
 fruit is more or less invested with the skin,
 which is with difficulty acted upon by the gastric
 fluids. Fruit whether fresh or dried when used
 to aid the bowels, should be taken when the

Stomach is free from other food, especially before breakfast and before dinner. The use of fruit after a regular Satisfactory meal of meat and vegetables is a common cause of Cholera and other disorders of the bowels by bringing on an acrid fermentation. Fruit and vegetables produce their laxative effect by their acid and saccharine qualities, and also by the bulk of their insoluble portions. Animal food has rather a laxative effect than the reverse, perhaps, owing to the animal oil intermixed with its fibres. Fatty substances are uniformly laxative, but they cannot be taken by weak Stomachs. Perhaps the very best advice to give a patient subject to this derangement would be to temporize with their trouble and employ different substances under different conditions. The means employed by Old School Practitioners to remedy this evil, are numerous, and it matters not whether they be Medicinal or Mechanical, they all seem to be used to force Nature instead of assisting her, It is a very

common practice with those, who still remain ignorant of the "Great Law of Cure" to administer in cases of Constipation, what they term gentle purgatives, for instance, Magnesia, which is decidedly impudicious treatment, because, when the quality of the Magnesia is bad, and there is no certainty of always getting it good in Allopathic doses, the acids of the digestive Canal are inadequate with conversion into a salt, and, mass being thrown in upon mass, (because allopaths do business in this way), the intestines will ultimately be clogged and sometimes wholly blocked up; consequently, rendering the disease a very formidable one. As I have said above, this treatment is made use of by those ignorant of the "Great Law of Cure", perhaps, by way of being facetious, it would be well to notice the exception to the proverb "Where ignorance is (not) bliss" at least to the patient. After the apothecary shop has been ransacked in vain, among the most formidable mechanical means that have been resorted to, has been the use of Air Expulsions,

and Tents of lint. In reference to Mechanical means, I do not wish to be understood as denning them of no consequence in the treatment of Constipation, for in many cases, they are absolutely necessary, but I most certainly deem them inadequate to the cure of this affection unassisted ^{by} medicinal means. But when the parts become paralyzed by a collection of hard feces, they should be relieved by mechanical means, and treated medicinally afterwards. In the treatment of this disease Homeopathically, we have among the most useful remedies. Bry. Mer. Nux Vom. Nat. Mur. Opium, Plat, Puls, Sep. Sulph and Syc, the indications for which are: -

Bry. Constipation occurring in Summer, in persons disposed to Rheumatism, or if it proceeds from disordered Stomach.

Mer. Constipation attended with bad taste in the mouth, gums sore and painful, appetite appears to undergo no change.

Nux Vom. Where Constipation is occasioned by excess or eating, or deranging the Stomach by any other excess, it is attended with loss of appetite,

when the faeces are hard and dry, and voided with great forcing, sometimes streaked with blood; Lycopodium is a remedy, the indication for which is where the constipation is Chronic, and stands out as the only Symptom; it is well adapted to persons of a bilious temperament, subject to attacks of difficult digestion, and general torpor of the abdominal organs, also for constipation arising from sedentary habits.

Opium like Mez. has the sensation of the Anus was closed, cardialgia, dryness of the Mouth, loss of appetite, congestion of blood to the head, head-ache accompanying the feeling of heaviness in the stomach it has a heating sensation, which, together with the dryness of the Mouth, seems to be the line of demarcation between it and Mez.

Platina will be found useful, where, after much vomiting on part of the Patient, he is able only to pass only small amounts, with the tension and a creeping sensation at the Anus often last long.

Nausea, and with distension of the abdomen, with pressure and heaviness; heat in the face; determination of blood to the head, with headache; disturbed sleep, oppression, Cardialgia, ill-humor, feeling as if the anus were closed, or contracted, with tenesmus.

Natron Muriacum is applicable in very obstinate cases, and where all other remedies fail, with no desire to go to stool; and when complete inaction of the Bowels has set in.

Opium like Nux Vom, has the sensation as if the anus was closed, Cardialgia, Dryness of the Mouth; loss of appetite, congestion of blood to the head, headache accompanying the feeling of heaviness in the abdomen it has a heating sensation, which, together with the dryness of the Mouth, seems to be the line of demarcation between it and Nux Vom.

Platina will be found useful, where, after much straining on part of the Patient, he is able only to pass only small lumps, with tenesmus, and a cramping sensation at the Anus after each evacuation;

complaining also of a chill, with a sensation of weakness in the abdomen, a constrictive pain in the abdomen, with pressure, pain in the stomach, and ineffectual efforts at evacuation.

Pulsatilla may be advantageously used in cases where Nux Vom is indicated, but where the patient is of a bland, phlegmatic disposition; or more particularly indicated for constipation, produced by derangement of the stomach the result of eating too much fat.

Spica is indicated in the case of females, or rheumatic individuals, also in cases where Nux. Vom, or Sulph., are peculiarly indicated, but are not sufficient.

Sulphur is particularly useful in the generality of cases where the costiveness is habitual, and is decidedly so, after N. Vom. to hypochondriacal and haemorrhoidal persons, and especially, if there be frequent but ineffectual desire to go to stool; with incarceration of flatulence, distension of the abdomen.

Alumina When the constipation seems to result from an apparent absence of peristaltic motion;